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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a case study of four African American hearing parents who participated in an intervention project involving reading story books to their deaf/hard-of-hearing (hh) young children. The study included the utilization of: (1) research-based literacy strategies for both hearing and deaf/hh children; (2) African-American cultural role models and mentors, both hearing and hearing impaired; (3) cultural books featuring African-American characters and themes; and (4) American Sign Language for communication purposes. Parent training sessions were in the parents' homes and included videotaping the parent reading/signing to their child and provision of feedback to parents based on a checklist of desirable literacy strategies. Among results of the intervention were the following: parents learned to modify reading strategies to fit the specific literacy needs of their deaf/hh child; parents began utilizing sign language more for daily communication; parents were exposed to African-American deaf culture and deaf culture in general; and the children were provided with a strong literacy model (their parent). (DB)

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# A Study of Four African-American Families Reading to Their Young Deaf Children (1996-1997). Final Report [for Student-Initiated Research Project].

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January 26, 2000

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Final Report for Grant #H023B60034 (Student-Initiated Research Project)

A Study of Four African-American Families Reading to Their Young Deaf Children (1996-1997)

Overview of the Project:

The project involved a case study of four African-American hearing parents reading storybooks to their deaf/hard-of-hearing (hh) children. The intervention project was designed to assist with the development of reading strategies that would help these parents to meet the early literacy needs of their deaf/hh children.

The study included the utilization of: (1) research-based literacy strategies for hearing children; (2) research-based literacy strategies for deaf/hh children; (3) African-American cultural role models, both hearing and deaf; (4) African-American mentors, both hearing and deaf; (5) cultural books featuring African-American characters and themes; and, (6) the utilization of American Sign Language for communication purposes.

Subjects:

Two families completed the training within the first year. A third family received only partial literacy development assistance. This family moved and the student director was unable to locate them for three weeks. As the parameters of the study called for consecutive visits, this family was withdrawn from the study. A one-year, no-cost time extension was requested due to the difficulty of obtaining additional, willing participants for this project. During the extension year, two additional families completed the intervention.

Method:

Reading sessions were held in the homes of the participating families. Following the preview of a storybook with the researcher, parents were videotaped reading/signing to their deaf/hh child. While the African-American deaf role model (research assistant) interacted with the children, the researcher and the parent reviewed the videotape. Parents were given positive feedback to improve the literacy strategies they used to read with their children.

Summary of overall accomplishments:

- Parents learned to modify reading strategies to fit the specific literacy needs of their deaf/hh child.

- Exposing the parents to literacy-based strategies for deaf children enabled them to develop parental reading skills using sign language.
- Parents began utilizing sign language not only as a directive tool, but also for daily communication.
- Utilizing cultural storybooks enabled the parents to connect storybook events to real life situations.
- Persons who were sensitive to the cultural and literacy needs of this population assisted in gaining parental support for their children's literacy development.
- The inclusion of the positive Black deaf role model provided these families with an important element that many African-American families with deaf/hh children do not have: access to a Black deaf adult.
- Parents gained knowledge about how their hearing culture and their ethnic culture affected the life of their deaf/hh child.
- Parents were exposed to African-American deaf culture and deaf culture in general.
- Reading storybooks to children on a daily base provided these deaf/hh children with a strong literacy model (their parent).

- Parents became literacy advocates for their deaf/hh child.
- Increased opportunity for reading interaction and increased access to reading materials altered the parents' view of their child's literacy and made them more aware of their child's literacy needs.
- Parents were encouraged to want to read to their deaf children.
- Parents gained insight into the importance of parental support and intervention in making sure that the literacy needs of their child were met.
- The standardized test scores of all four children increased.

Follow-up Activities:

Following the completion of the project, parents were invited to a Saturday workshop/picnic. Parents were encouraged to share their concerns and experiences regarding their child's literacy development. Following the meeting, parents made the decision to continue to meet to share ideas. While the parents attended the workshop, their deaf/hh children were involved with literacy development activities with deaf adults.

Three presentations were made to share findings with interested professionals and parents. This is a listing of those presentations:

1997 National Multicultural Deaf Conference - "A Study of Four African-American Parents Reading to their Young Deaf Children"

1998 Bryan Independent School District (College Station, Texas), "Improving the Reading and Writing Skills of Deaf Children"

1998 Texas Statewide Conference on Education of the Deaf, An Update of "A Study of Four African-American Parents Reading to their Young Deaf Children"

Data from the research for this grant was also utilized for a doctoral dissertation. One year following the end of the extension, the dissertation had been completed. Attached is a copy of the dissertation abstract.

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF FOUR AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILIES

READING TO THEIR YOUNG DEAF CHILDREN

by

Zanthia Y. Smith

This is a multiple case study of four African-American hearing parents reading storybooks to their deaf/hh children. This four-week intervention project was designed to assist with the development of reading strategies that would help parents to meet the early literacy needs of their deaf/hard-of-hearing children.

The study involved the utilization of: (1) research-based literacy strategies for deaf/hh children; (2) research-based literacy strategies for hearing children; (3) African-American deaf culture; (4) African-American hearing culture; (5) an African-American hearing mentor; (6) an African-American deaf role model; (7) cultural books featuring African-American characters and themes; and, (8) American Sign Language skills.

Reading sessions were held in the homes of the participating families. Following the preview of a storybook with the researcher, parents were videotaped reading/signing to their deaf/hh child. While the African-American deaf role model (research assistant) interacted

with the children, the researcher and the parent reviewed the videotape. Parents were given positive feedback regarding the strategies they used to read with their children. Parents were then provided with the opportunity to interact with the research assistant.

A parental reading checklist was used to evaluate: (1) the number of reading strategies parents utilized when reading; (2) parents' incorporation of the researcher's feedback during subsequent reading sessions; and (3) parents' literacy-related interaction with their deaf/hh child.

For each reading session, transcripts were made of parents' signed interaction with their deaf/hh children. To evaluate parental perception of changes in literacy skill and communication skill development, parent questionnaires were completed prior to and following the intervention. Classroom teachers were interviewed to identify formal literacy teaching strategies being utilized with each child. Standardized tests were administered to the deaf/hh children to identify changes in their reading readiness skill development. Reading readiness skill development increased for all children involved in the project.